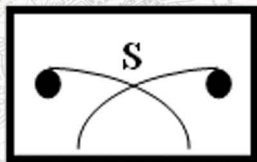


HOW TO COMPLETE THE BATTLE STAFF COURSE



By Sgt. Maj. Gabriel Maddox

As leaders, we have an obligation to best prepare our NCOs to perform the staff functions, especially for times when primary staff members are otherwise engaged on the battlefield.



Completing the Battle Staff Course gives staff NCOs the skills they need to manage the daily operations of a battalion or brigade command post, said Sgt. Maj.

Curtis Magee, chief instructor of the Battle Staff Course at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. "It's important for these staff NCOs to learn their specific staff duties and be familiar with other staff sections' duties."

As America's Army gets more technical, there is a greater need for our noncommissioned officers to understand the complex inner workings of a battle staff while becoming a warfighter of the 21st Century.

The Battle Staff Noncommissioned Officer Course (BSNCOC) is realistic, fast-paced and performance-oriented training. The course teaches NCOs — staff sergeants through sergeants major — to work as members of a battalion or brigade maneuver unit staff. They learn to assist in managing the complex operations in the various command posts.

The students must master several major requirements to successfully complete the demanding four-week course. Major subjects of study include Plans, Orders and Annexes; Graphics and Overlays; Military Intelligence; and Combat Service Support Operations.



Complete Phase I

The first requirement is to see your unit's training NCO to get enrolled through Army Training Requirements and Resource System (ATRRS) for Phase I and Phase II of the Battle Staff Course. The student must successfully complete Phase I in order to attend Phase II.

Phase I consists of 12 CDs that contain 23 self-study lessons and an online examination. The students must score 70 percent or better to receive a "GO" on the Phase I exam. Once the student is enrolled in ATRRS, he or she will receive the study material by mail. Students have 60 days to complete Phase I.

COURSE



Meet weight standards

The height and weight standards are the same requirement for all Army schools: you must meet the height and weight standards in accordance with AR 600-9. This may sound like an easy requirement, but approximately one in every 55 students fail this requirement.

Pass Record APFT

Another requirement comes from AR 350-1, which states that you must pass a record Army Physical Fitness Test within 72 hours of starting the course.

Students who attend the course at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss will find that the climate may take its toll. Bliss is located in the Franklin Mountains of El Paso. The region is considered a desert environment and is also approximately 3,700 feet above sea level. The elevation plays a big role during the record Army Physical Fitness Test; students on average lose approximately a minute to a minute and a half off of their run times.



Phase II attendance

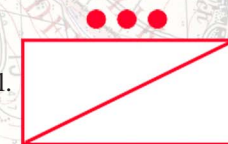
The students attend Phase II, which uses interactive small-group instruction, either as a resident at Fort Bliss, Texas, or Fort McCoy, Wis.; or they attend through video-teletraining at one of the certified sites Armywide.



Graphics and Overlays block

This requirement is one of the most challenging portions of the course and has the highest failure rate of any of the blocks of instruction. The standards for this block of instruction come from FM 101-5-1. Some of the major reasons for Graphics and Overlays failures are:

- ⊗ Poor basic map reading skills. Combined with limited ability to use the legend of a map, students aren't able to plot six-digit grid coordinates, causing them to misplot symbols and control measures.
- ⊗ Lack of attention to detail. For example: failing to label the mandatory fields (role indicator, size





NCO Journal photo

Part of the Battle Staff planning process students learn through the course is the performance of rehearsals. Above, instructors lead students through a terrain-model rehearsal which helps subordinate leaders visualize the commander's intent and concept of operations in the field. The terrain-model rehearsal is the most popular of the rehearsal techniques.

indicator and unit designation). Neatness is critical when doing overlays and some students try to draw the symbols freehand if they get behind using the template.

⊗ Failure to interpret the Operations Order. Some students have trouble identifying surrounding units. This leads to incorrect labeling of phase lines, boundaries and other control measures.

⊗ Failure to use the recommended plotting sequence. Students sometimes draw symbols out of sequence, resulting in erasures and redraws of various requirements. This causes the loss of valuable time during practical exercises and the examination.

⊗ Failure to double-check their work. Once the students finish, they should double-check their work and ask themselves a few questions: Do I have the mandatory fields correct? Does the symbol require a special size-indicator (task force or company team)? Are my boundaries labeled correctly? What kind of unit is it?

Plans, Orders and Annexes block

Everything the students need to successfully complete the course can be found in FM 101-5. Students learn how to prepare a Warning Order and then follow it up with a brigade or battalion Operations Order with all appropriate annexes. They also learn how to prepare and use fragmentary orders to change missions when directed. They prepare their unit's orders for execution during the command post exercise. The problems the students usually have are because they don't pay attention to detail.

Military Intelligence block

The Military Intelligence block of instruction is the second most challenging area next to Graphics and Overlays. One of the problems is that very few NCOs work in this area. The MI block helps the student get a better understanding of exactly what the S-2 duties and responsibilities are. Students that have a basic understanding of opposing forces doctrine are a step ahead of others during this block. Students complete practical

exercises in three or four-person teams during these lessons. The students must use all the staff elements in processing and disseminating intelligence information. The students must pay attention to detail and be able to assimilate multiple documents into the decision-making process to complete this block of instruction.

Combat Service Support block

Few have trouble with the CSS block of instruction since most NCOs have had some experience working with Combat Service Support elements. If they've fueled and fixed equipment and have worked with S-1 and S-4 NCOs they will have no problems with this block of instruction, but it still requires attention to detail.

10-Minute Military Information Briefing

This is the same requirement that NCOs must complete for NCO Education System courses. Students will research, prepare and present a 10-minute (plus or minus two minutes) military information brief.

Command Post Exercise

The students' final requirement is to participate in a Command Post Exercise (CPX). The students are assigned a staff position and during the CPX they must work that position. The CPX is the culmination of everything the students have learned and now must put into action.

The course prerequisites are outlined in AR 351-4. Units should take the time to carefully choose the right Soldiers to attend the Battle Staff Course. They should be selected based on their MOS and position. Once a Soldier is selected to attend, he or she should contact a recent graduate who can mentor the Soldier regarding the course. All Battle Staff Course graduates should take the time to share and pass on the skills they learned in the course. As a Battle Staff Course graduate, you will be a well-trained and highly skilled 21st Century warfighter.

For additional information on the Battle Staff Course, contact either of the following: BSC Chief Instructor at DSN 978-9165; BSC Senior Instructor at DSN 978-9194/9211 (commercial prefix for all numbers is 915-568-XXXX). The fax number is DSN 978-8145. You may also visit the Web site at <http://www.usasma.bliss.army.mil/BSNCOC>.

Editor's note: Sgt. Maj. Gabriel Maddox is a senior instructor at the Battle Staff NCO Course, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

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